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AUTHOR Hoyt, Kenneth B.
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ABSTRACT

Responsibilities of the formal education system in the collaborative effort among various parts of the Department of Labor, community based organizations, and the formal education system called for by the Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act (YEDPA) of 1977 are addressed in this paper. Its basic thesis is that, as education discharges its obligations under YEDPA, a series of opportunities for needed basic structural changes in education will inevitably emerge. To defend this thesis, obligations of the formal education system found in the YEDPA legislation are specified, youth needs to be met by the collaborative effort involving the education system are listed, and a series of opportunities for basic educational change growing out of methods required to meet education's obligations are identified. Opportunities discussed include the following: to plan and implement ways of utilizing the broader community in the educative process; to learn about and implement new ways of awarding academic credit; to provide diversified educational opportunities of students within the framework of an integrated educational system; to enhance and protect freedom of career choice; and to relate educational experiences to later lifestyle activities of youth. (TA)

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YEDPA: OBLIGATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION

Kenneth B. Hoyt
Director, Office of Career Education
U.S. Office of Education

Introduction

Since 1960, the ratio of youth to adult unemployment has remained stable at about 3:1. Likewise, the ratio of unemployment among non-white youth, as opposed to white youth, has remained at about 2:1. During this same period, underemployment among youth, defined as the number accepting employment at a lower level than that for which they are prepared, has increased dramatically.

Conscious and conscientious attempts to deal with this problem have been mounted in recent years by various parts of the Department of Labor, by a variety of community based organizations, and by the formal education system. From a "results" viewpoint, these efforts have not succeeded in altering these ratios. This, of course, does not mean that good and worthwhile things have not been learned nor that youth, in general, have not received assistance.

The Congress, in enacting the Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act of 1977, recognized the past contributions of these three societal elements by including all of them in the legislation. In doing so, the Congress asked each to: (a) increase the intensity and variety of their actions; and (b) work together rather than separately. When results are assessed, the

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"bottom line" will be the extent to which the youth/work/schooling problem has been alleviated. The "next-to-the-bottom line" will be the extent to which and the effectiveness with which a true collaborative effort has been initiated.

The purpose of this presentation is to address responsibilities of the formal education system in this collaborative effort. Its basic thesis is that, as education discharges its obligations under YEDPA, a series of opportunities for needed basic structural changes in education will inevitably emerge. While the YEDPA, by itself, is not a sufficient reason to change the American education system, it may well become a catalyst for change.

To defend this thesis, an attempt will first be made to specify obligations of the formal education system found in the YEDPA legislation. This will be followed by a listing of youth needs to be met by the collaborative effort involving the education system. Finally, a series of opportunities for basic educational change growing out of methods required to meet education's obligations will be identified and briefly discussed.

Obligations of Education Found in the YEDPA Legislation

The YEDPA law--P.L. 95-93--identifies specific obligations of education in several places. They can be summarized as follows:

Title I - Young Adult Conservation Corps

1. The Secretary of Labor is required to work with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to make suitable arrangements whereby academic credit may be awarded by educational institutions and agencies

for competencies derived from work experience. (Sec. 804(e)). This requirement exists in spite of the fact that the formal education system will not be directly involved in providing nor in evaluating training.

2. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture may make grants to any public agency or organization for State and/or local programs funded with the 30% of funds set aside for State and local programs. (Sec. 806(a)(2)). Public educational institutions qualify for such grants.

Title II, Subpart 1 - Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Projects

1. The prime sponsor must provide assurances that arrangements have been made with the appropriate LEA that participating in-school youth are enrolled and meeting the minimum academic and attendance requirements of the school. (Sec. 327(a)(4)(K)). LEAs have obvious obligations to supply prime sponsors with these data under clear agreements.
2. The Secretary of Labor must, in his report to the Congress, include data with respect to the degree to which employment opportunities provided have caused out-of-school youths to return to school or others to remain in school. (Sec. 329(3)). LEAs have clear obligations to: (a) devise and implement arrangements for out-of-school youth to return to school; and (b) participate in efforts to encourage in-school youth enrolled here to remain in school.
3. The prime sponsor must provide assurances that consultation has been held with public and private nonprofit educational agencies including

vocational and postsecondary education institutions. (Sec. 327(a)(4)(D)). Educational institutions have an obligation to provide such consultation.

4. Employment opportunities provided youth participating under this subpart may take place in LEAs, institutions of higher education, and other kinds of educational institutions. (Sec. 326(1)). The Education system has an obligation to make available some employment opportunities for youth enrolled under this subpart.

Title II, Subpart 2 - Youth Community Conservation and Improvement Projects

1. The prime sponsor is required to include, in the proposed agreement to conduct such a project, a description of arrangements made with school systems--including school cooperative programs. (Sec. 336(b)(1)). Educators have an obligation to work with prime sponsors in making such arrangements.
2. The prime sponsor is required to describe plans for coordinating the training and work experience with school-related programs, including awarding academic credit. (Sec. 336(b)(2)). Educators have an obligation to participate in forming and carrying out these plans.
3. Projects are required to be conducted in such a manner as to permit participating in-school youth to coordinate their jobs with classroom instruction. (Sec. 337(b)(2)). Educators have a responsibility to arrange school schedules--and the school day--in ways that make such coordination workable and effective.

Title II, Subpart 3 - Youth Employment and Training Programs

1. The program for in-school youth, under this subpart, must be administered, under contracts with the prime sponsor, by an LEA, a consortium of LEAs, or by a postsecondary educational institution. (Sec. 346(c)(2)). Educators have an obligation to administer such efforts.
2. The program for in-school youth may include a variety of school-to-work transition services for all youth, ages 16-21 as well as special work experience programs for economically disadvantaged youth. (Sec. 345(a)(2)). Educators have an obligation to plan for implementing programs of both types.
3. Economically disadvantaged in-school youth participating in this subpart are to be selected by the educational institution based on certification made by school-based guidance counselors. (Sec. 346(c)(6)). Educational institutions have an obligation to perform this selection function and to demonstrate its validity.
4. Not less than 22% of the funds available under this subpart must be used for programs for in-school youth under agreements between prime sponsors and LEAs. (Sec. 343(d)). LEAs have an obligation to make sure this 22% is a minimum, not a maximum, and to enter into subcontracts with postsecondary education institutions to serve youth in such settings.
5. LEAs are required to secure funds from prime sponsors for use, in part, to employ additional school-based counselors to carry out provisions of this subpart. (Sec. 346(c)(3)). LEAs have an obligation to do so without supplanting currently employed counselors.

6. Special provisions are made to encourage programs to make available employment and career counseling to presecondary youth. (Sec. 348(c)(1)(E)). Educators have an obligation to discover and implement ways of making this a reality.
7. Ten percent of funds available under this subpart may be used for work experience programs for youth from various socioeconomic levels and are not restricted to economically disadvantaged youth. (Sec. 345(a)). Educators have an obligation to plan for and implement this section of the Act.
8. Youth Councils are to be established under this subpart. (Sec. 346(b)). Educators have an obligation to participate in such youth councils and for working constructively with them.

There are, thus, a minimum of 20 legal obligations for education specified in this law. When viewed collectively, they tell us a great deal about what education is to do, but very little about how these obligations are to be met.

Specific Youth Needs Addressed in the YEDPA Legislation

Title II of YEDPA contains references to a variety of youth needs to be met jointly through collaborative efforts of CETA prime sponsors, community based organizations, and educational institutions. While education is not solely responsible for meeting these needs, it behooves all educators to be aware of their nature. Including both in-school and out-of-school youth, Subparts 1 and 2 pertain to needs of economically disadvantaged youth, ages 16-19. Subpart 3 refers to needs of all youth, ages 16-21 as well as certain additional needs of economically disadvantaged youth.

A summary listing of such youth needs for economically disadvantaged youth includes the need to:

Subpart 1:

1. Earn enough money so they can remain in high school
2. Earn enough money so they can return to high school (for dropouts)
3. Find ways of re-entering high school (for dropouts)
4. Discover career-related reasons for completing high school

Subpart 2:

1. Earn money while acquiring specific vocational skills
2. Expand options for vocational skill training beyond those offered by the education system
3. Acquire general employability skills

Subpart 3:

1. Engage in subsidized work experience that will enable them to explore career options and make better career decisions
2. Acquire specific vocational skills
3. Be recipients of transition services called for in this subpart available to all youth

Under Subpart 3, a total of 16 youth needs are identified to be made available to all participating youth, ages 16-21. These include, for example, the need for:

1. Counseling, including career counseling
2. Occupational, educational, and labor market information of a national, State, and local nature

3. Assistance in making the transition from school to work
4. Career exploration in both the public and private sector
5. Job placement assistance
6. Assistance in combatting race and sex stereotyping as deterrents to full freedom of educational and occupational choice

These youth needs have been listed for three purposes: (a) to illustrate that they represent needs all three partners in this collaborative effort have been trying to meet for several years; (b) to emphasize that the Act provides a series of new resources and development of approaches to meeting these needs; and (c) to point out once more that these needs are to be met through a collaborative effort.

Opportunities for Needed Educational Change

American education cannot fully meet its YEDPA obligations through its present structure. Change is needed. Such change must be planned and implemented in ways consistent with all basic goals of education and the educational needs of all students. YEDPA provides education with several opportunities for basic change as it seeks to meet its obligations under this Act.

Opportunity 1: To plan and implement ways of utilizing the broader community in the educative process. Several parts of YEDPA contain provisions for in-school youth to utilize the personnel and physical resources of the broader community, as well as those of the education system, in preparing themselves for work. This should be welcomed as an opportunity to use the community as a learning laboratory. Educators have known, for years, that

youth can and do learn in more places than the classroom, in more ways than through reading books, and from more persons than classroom teachers. In this increasingly complex society, we can no longer plan to duplicate community learning resources within the schoolhouse walls. If we can apply such principles to the business/labor/industry community, we can also apply them for other purposes to such community settings as libraries, museums, art galleries, and community service agencies. Just as students can learn outside of the school building, so, too, can educators. To seize this opportunity would provide educators a means to implement such longstanding educational goals as those found in the extended school day, the distended school, and the year-round school.

Opportunity 2: To learn about and implement new ways of awarding academic credit. Throughout the YEDPA, repeated emphasis is placed on the need to find ways of awarding academic credit for work experience. Since four out of every five high schools already do so, there is nothing new about the concept. What is new is the request that academic credit be awarded for experiences neither supervised nor evaluated by professional educators. On top of this, parts of YEDPA also ask for academic credit to be awarded both for basic academic skills and employability skills acquired through the YEDPA experience.

American education faces serious and inescapable responsibilities both to guarantee the validity of academic credit granted and for assuring that such credits are appropriate to count toward graduation requirements. These

responsibilities can be met within the framework of the YEDPA legislation only if planning and implementation efforts in the arena of performance evaluation are stressed. Such efforts must move us away from so great a dependence on the amount of time spent in a classroom as a criterion for credit-counting and toward a greater emphasis on demonstrated performance. Resistance to performance evaluation, as a basis for granting academic credit, has come both because some educational experiences defy pure performance evaluation and because instrumentation for performance evaluation remains imperfect. If the YEDPA legislation can serve to stimulate educators to value, to validate, and to use performance evaluation as a basis for granting academic credit, a significant step will have been taken toward improving our entire system of formal education. The large sums of discretionary knowledge building funds available under YEDPA should help greatly.

Opportunity 3: To provide diversified educational opportunities for students within the framework of an integrated educational system. All three subparts of Title II of YEDPA provide multiple opportunities for special services aimed at helping economically disadvantaged students. It is a direction that is eminently necessary. This is not to say it is sufficient. We must follow this same principle for all. This, too, represents an opportunity for educational planning and implementation long overdue in American education. The principle under question is what some have described as the "doctrine of fairness" which holds that, to be fair to all students, we must expose all to exactly the same experiences. To those who recognize

and value individual differences, it is better known as the "doctrine of unfairness"--i.e., as a doctrine that should be abolished. A true "doctrine of fairness" would demand that, assuming a common core of basic knowledge at what Commissioner Ernest Boyer has described as the "basic school" and "middle school" levels, differing educational opportunities be made available, in the form of both in-school and community educational experiences, for all students. If the YEDPA legislation can stimulate a basic change in American education, especially at the grade 10-12 level, aimed at providing a variety of kinds of "learning to do" and "doing to learn" educational experiences for all students, it will have made a significant contribution.

Opportunity 4: To enhance and protect freedom of career choice. Both Title I and Subparts 1 and 2 of YEDPA's Title II are restrictive in terms of the type of work experience and training opportunities made available to economically disadvantaged youth. The economic rewards resulting from participation may well cause many such youth to narrow their consideration of possible occupational choices to those available under the Act. To avoid this danger, it is essential that educators start planning now to discover ways of helping economically disadvantaged youth whose career goals differ from opportunities available under this Act to discover alternative ways of moving toward such career goals.

Once again, education is faced with a stimulus opportunity to change holding implications for all students. One's career choices profoundly affect the

individual's total lifestyle. Such choices have been unduly restricted for many youth on the basis of parental occupation, socioeconomic level, occupational stereotyping based on race, sex, and physical handicaps, and, most of all, by inadequate opportunities to engage in career exploration in the occupational society itself. With more than seven out of every ten youth currently enrolled in secondary schools and colleges currently expressing need for more help in career decision making, the time has surely come to consider this as a challenge for educational planners and decision-makers. The need to plan for and provide multiple opportunities for career exploration for all students is made clear by the special challenges the YEDPA legislation poses for economically disadvantaged students. It is a need that must be met.

Opportunity 5: To relate educational experiences to later lifestyle activities of youth. Title II, Subpart 3, of YEDPA calls for school based counselors to certify that work experience opportunities are related to career and educational goals of participating students. This, of course, is only the top of the "iceberg" of educational relevancy. Whether or not work experiences are related to educational experiences will, in reality, depend on the degree to which the teaching faculty recognizes the need and possibilities for doing so. Important as counselors obviously are, it is in the classroom, not in the counselor's office, where the student will either experience--or fail to experience--relationships between school subjects and work experience opportunities available under YEDPA.

If YEDPA can stimulate American education to move toward an increased emphasis, in every classroom, on the usefulness of subject matter in both career and other lifestyle actvities, great progress will have been made. Such an effort will surely alleviate such current symptoms of educational deficiency as lowered test scores, classroom discipline, and high truancy rates. When both student and teacher can clearly see the usefulness of the subject matter, the general health of American education will surely improve. The key person among professional educators is the classroom teacher. Hopefully, implementation of YEDPA will reinforce this most basic of all educational truths.

Concluding Remarks

It is apparent that the YEDPA legislation addresses a host of youth needs that have been of concern to American education for several years. It is equally apparent that, by calling for a collaborative effort involving other segments of the community also concerned aobut such youth needs, the odds of meeting such needs is enhanced.

The YEDPA legislation clearly calls for the active and deep involvement of professional educators. The obligations of educators contained in this legislation cannot be fully met unless some basic changes are made in the system of education. This legislation can serve as a catalyst for stimulating such changes in directions that will enhance the quality of education. It is an opportunity that must not be missed and a challenge that must be met.